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## THE MEXICAN RECOGNITION OF TEXAS

It hardly need be said that from 1836 to 1845, even amid all the inconsistencies that surrounded it, Mexican feeling in regard to Texas and the Texan question was consistently bitter.<sup>1</sup> In opening Congress on the first day of January, 1838, President Bustamante said: "With respect to the Texas campaign, I will only observe that its prosecution is the first duty of the Government and of all Mexicans"; and this was the refrain perpetually. The province had rebelled; by the fortune of war a Mexican army had been vanquished; a Mexican president had been taken prisoner; the national honor must therefore be vindicated, and the national interests must be protected. The smallest crumb of victory against the "rebels" was hailed with unbounded exultation. Even as far from the capital as Tabasco, *La Aurora*, on hearing of a successful raid, exclaimed: "What Mexican does not feel in his breast an insuppressible joy on seeing the arms of his nation triumphant ever against a horde of infamous bandits?" "Urgent necessity of the Texas war", became a stock phrase with journalists and pamphleteers, and the trumpet was sounded in every key.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to this fundamental sentiment, there were certain related ideas that increased its power. Foreign nations are watching our conduct in this matter, argued the writers, hoping to make us the plaything of their whims and designs. The American Union in particular was represented as covetous of its neighbor's territory and even as plotting to extinguish her independence. The United States, "in their delirious ambition, aspire to plant their unclean flag, the emblem of treason, ingratitude, and injustice, in beautiful and opulent Mexico", cried a pamphleteer in 1842; and this idea became almost as familiar and almost as unquestioned as the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover the influence of the Texan affair was artificially increased by certain politicians who found it useful, and particularly by Santa Anna, that prince of schemers. He, on opening Congress in 1842, spoke thus with reference to the war:

<sup>1</sup> The words "State Dept." refer to the archives of the United States State Department; "F. O." to the archives of the British Foreign Office preserved at the Public Record Office, London; and "Sria. Relac." to the archives of the Secretaría de Relaciones, Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Bustamante, F. O., Mexico, CXIII.; *La Aurora*, October 27, 1842.

"If we wish to preserve an honorable name among civilized nations, it is necessary that we should employ all our energies and resources in combating without ceasing, and at any sacrifice and all hazards, until our arms and our pretensions shall finally triumph"; and in time this matter became an integral part of Mexican life and consciousness, overpowering the imagination and sapping the strength of the nation like a cancer.<sup>3</sup>

Intelligent men saw, however, that Texas could not be recovered, and a few dared speak of peace. Cañedo, for instance, did so when Minister of Foreign Relations in 1839, and early in 1844 that statesman expressed a similar view in the *Revista Económica y Comercial de la República Mexicana*. Since 1836, he there argued, the Texans have gained strength in all ways, and "the permanence of their nationality can no longer be regarded as problematical." No doubt Mexico has a right to put down rebellion; but all rebels, if they succeed, are recognized as sovereign states. The Texans are brave, hardy, skilful. "Displaying an enthusiasm that borders on madness, they fight with untiring constancy and unflinching resolution in the cause of their independence", and no reverses can discourage them. Our troops, on the other hand, would struggle against them under every disadvantage. Really the only chance of success would be in a naval attack, and for that we lack not only ports and navy yards but a merchant marine in which to train our seamen. We should have to obtain vessels and officers from abroad; and the foreigners would not only feel no patriotic interest in the cause, but would despise the Mexicans under their command. Hence bickerings would arise and not a few of the men would be likely to desert. Besides, war with one country would be war with two. The American government "cannot prevent their people from taking part in preparations for the defense of Texas"—the inducements are too strong. And for what purpose would all our efforts be made? To subjugate a horde of aliens and recover a province less valuable to us than the least productive of those we still have, only to find it necessary in the end either to exterminate the inhabitants or to settle the matter by negotiation. Many say it is better to continue the war, because if peace be made the Texans will encroach upon us. But in that case all the advantages would lie upon our side. It would be for them to make the long marches, to operate in a foreign country, to contend against an alien race. Nor should it be objected that further secessions would occur as the consequence

<sup>3</sup> *Urgente Necesidad de la Guerra de Tejas* (México, 1842); Santa Anna, *National Intelligencer*, July 22, 1842.

of acknowledging the independence of Texas, for were a truly Mexican province to revolt we could recover it, as France recovered La Vendée, because the people there would be of our race. By making peace with Texas we should secure great benefits at home, and by ending a war that hinders commerce and progress we should gain credit among the nations.<sup>4</sup>

This disposition on the part of a few to recognize the facts was supported by France and still more vigorously by England. Now and again, beginning rather early in 1839, the British government recommended and urged in the strongest terms, as a most desirable and indeed a most necessary step, that Mexico acknowledge the independence of Texas; and one is amazed to find that, even at a time when English influence was powerful in the country, no regard was paid to her wishes and apparently no consideration given to the weighty reasons which she put forward. Yet in reality the inaction of Mexico was not due merely to blindness, indolence, or obstinacy. She, as well as Great Britain, had reasons, and there were not a few of them.<sup>5</sup>

In the first place any nation would be reluctant to acknowledge itself defeated by rebels, and this was peculiarly true in a case where so vast a disparity of numbers and wealth existed. Racial pride not only emphasized this reluctance, but led the Mexicans to scorn the Texan colonists as beggars because they had asked for lands, and as ingrates because they had revolted. Thirdly, the Mexicans gloried not a little in having abolished slavery, and it was felt by many that in effect a recognition of the lost province would be an endorsement of an odious institution against which the nation had committed itself. "The question of Texas", remarked Santa Anna, "involves another of the greatest importance to the cause of humanity—that of slavery. Mexico, which has given the noble and illustrious example of refusing to increase her wealth and even to cultivate her fields, that she may not see them fattened with the sweat, the blood and the tears of the African race, will not go backward in this policy." Fourthly, as Cañedo's article suggested, it was feared that an acknowledgment of Texan independence would encourage other dissatisfied sections, particularly California, to secede.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> January 15, 1844.

<sup>5</sup> Pakenham, no. 45, June 3, 1839, F. O., Mexico, CXXIII. Some of the statements made below in support of the last sentence of this paragraph are conclusions based upon a rather extensive examination of contemporary Mexican periodicals found in many parts of the republic, and it would be undesirable no doubt to give a great number of references to inaccessible documents.

<sup>6</sup> Santa Anna to Hamilton, New Orleans *Bee*, March 12, 1842.

The Mexicans tried to believe also, and most of them were successful, that the United States had instigated the rebellion; they knew that our country had long desired the region; and they could not forget that many volunteers from the United States had aided the people of Texas to defeat their troops. "Who is not aware", demanded *El Provisional* in 1842 in an article reproduced by the government newspaper, "of that criminal connivance, of that determined and insolent protection which—in defiance of sound law and in violation of the treaties with Mexico—is given by the policy of North America to a department filled with rebels from every land, who are resolved to pollute the whole of it and to insult the dignity and honor of a lawfully constituted government?" This language well represents the popular feeling, and a sentence from Santa Anna will show that it varied little from the official view. "The civilized world will not learn without scandal", said the head of the nation in the same year, "that the inhabitants of the United States, infringing their own laws and violating the most sacred international rights, are supporting for the second time a usurpation which they began and constantly promoted, abusing and mocking the generosity with which the Mexicans bestowed upon their fellow-countrymen rich and coveted lands and an invitation to enjoy the benefits of our institutions." For these and other reasons the Mexicans were unfriendly towards the United States; and not only did this nation wish Texas recognized, as it was believed, but it seemed very possible that an acknowledgment of her independence would assist us to obtain the coveted territory, and so would bring us into a dangerous contact with several disaffected departments. Resentment and self-interest co-operated, therefore, from this point of view in urging that recognition be withheld.<sup>7</sup>

In another way no less, the unfriendly feeling against the American Union worked in that direction. The Mexicans were keenly alive to the fact that great differences of opinion between North and South existed here, and that Texas was a bone of contention among us. The following passage, for example, is an editorial utterance from the *Cincinnati Gazette*, which like many others was sent home by the Mexican minister both in English and in Spanish:

When before, indeed, has public duplicity been more foul, or the violation of public faith more glaring, than in his [Tyler's] whole conduct towards our neighbor [Mexico]? We were at peace with her, and professed to be her friend. Under the garb of friendship, we had persuaded Mexico to stop for a while her war movement against Texas,

<sup>7</sup> *El Provisional*, September 9, 1842; Santa Anna to Hamilton, *loc. cit.*

and in the very spirit of friendship she had heard and heeded our counsel; and while thus we stood towards each other in the sight of man and of God, we were secretly plotting to rob her of that very territory which she claimed! Shame upon the man who brought upon us this national disgrace, and upon that portion of the people who have tamely submitted to the dishonor!

Both North and South the words "disunion" and "dissolution" were menacingly uttered; and our neighbors, arguing from their own methods, looked for a breaking-up of this country. "Perhaps the day is not far distant", wrote the Mexican minister to the United States in August, 1844, "when we shall see two republics in place of these now united states", and he thought the anticipated election of Clay to the presidency in the autumn of that year might precipitate the crash.<sup>8</sup>

It was therefore a definite aim of Mexican policy to stimulate our differences. Over and over again the Minister of Foreign Relations, in a letter addressed in October, 1844, to Shannon, the American representative, but really intended for the public, made a striking distinction between the two sections of this country. Now he dwelt upon "the artifices by which the government and the southern people" of the Union had created the Texan situation; now he lamented the evils brought upon his country by "the faithless [*poco leal*] conduct of the government and the people of the southern States"; and finally he referred to the North as "that portion [of the Union] on whose honor Mexico relies, doing to it the justice which it merits, and which its own government endeavors to take from it, by representing it as an accomplice in a policy to which the nobleness of its generous sentiments is repugnant". From this point of view it was plainly for the interest of Mexico to render the Texas controversy as permanent and bitter as possible, in order to paralyze or at least weaken a neighbor whom she dreaded, and thus not only protect herself but gain the revenge for which she longed.<sup>9</sup>

England, though not hated, was regarded with suspicion. In 1825, when the draft of a treaty with that country, which the Mexican government had been eager to conclude, was laid before Congress, Great Britain was held up there "as an Object of Jealousy and Suspicion", and great pains were taken "to excite Doubts, and Fears, with respect to her future conduct". The following year, when the author of a violent pamphlet against the English was

<sup>8</sup> *Gazette*, quoted by *National Intelligencer*, December 13, 1844; Almonte, no. 99, August 18, 1844, *Sria. Relac.*

<sup>9</sup> Rejon to Shannon, October 31, 1844, *House Ex. Doc. No. 19*, 28 Cong., 2 sess., p. 8.

banished by President Victoria, Congress annulled almost unanimously the "extraordinary powers" which had enabled him to inflict this merited punishment. In 1833 a letter was published in the official newspaper charging England with a design to interfere in the internal political affairs of Mexico. The heavy debt to English bondholders was felt to be a sort of usurpation of power over the nation. The British recognition of Texas caused very deep resentment. The English held great properties in the country, and their government were continually making claims and uttering protests in behalf of the owners. British capitalists were believed to have co-operated with Santa Anna in looting the public treasury; and a secret correspondence was commonly said to have been discovered after his fall, in which he had agreed to surrender Yucatan and California to England. A little later the Mexican correspondent of the London *Times* reported that the "grasping policy of Great Britain", and in particular her supposed designs upon California, were "a constant theme of declamation and complaint". There was a fear that by following British advice a still greater hold upon the country as a whole or at least upon some portion of it might be given her, and therefore it seemed best upon general principles to hold off in this matter.<sup>10</sup>

More particularly it was suspected that England herself had a covetous eye upon Texas. In 1842 a New Orleans newspaper suggested that she wanted to get that country into her power so as to control a cotton-growing region, and was using Mexico as a cat's-paw; and the Mexican consul brought this article to the attention of his government. In March, 1836, the cabinet of Mexico had been disposed to hand over her rebellious aliens in the north to England; but the later feeling was very different. "There is no power on Earth", wrote the American minister at that capital in February, 1844, "with which Mexico would not rather see Texas connected than with England, either as a colony, or upon any other footing of dependency or union, political or commercial." Upshur,

<sup>10</sup> Morier and Ward, April 30, 1825, F. O., Mexico, XII.; Ward, March 10, 1826, *ibid.*, XX.; (design to interfere) Pakenham, no. 77, December 23, 1833, *ibid.*, LXXX.; (looting) Green, United States chargé, said in a private letter to the United States Secretary of State, dated June 17, 1844 (State Dept., Desps. from Mins., Mexico, XII.): "The English merchants here are all in favor of his [Santa Anna's] Govt., because under his administration, *negocios* (which in English may be rendered *transactions* effected by bribery) are most frequent and most profitable. They are his best customers; they pay most liberally for exclusive licenses to import, etc. etc.—They put money in their pockets; he amasses golden ounces. They serve each other, and the interest of G. B. is on his side." (Correspondence) Bankhead, no. 111, December 31, 1844, F. O. Mexico, CLXXVII.; *Times*, April 11, 1846.

our Secretary of State, in a conversation held with Almonte, the Mexican representative, at about the same time argued that it would be "infinitely better" for the latter's country that Texas form a part of the American Union than that she should be a commercial dependency of England, and in this view General Almonte fully concurred. That gentleman wrote to his government that what England and France aimed at in advising that peace be made, was to establish a home for their surplus population between the Rio Grande and the Sabine, and create a new market there from which to "inundate" Mexico with smuggled goods. Finally, there was a lack of faith in England's intention to carry the matter through. In December, 1844, the same minister said, when instructed to ascertain her real policy regarding the annexation of Texas, that he positively knew she was not disposed to have war with the United States on account of that affair.<sup>11</sup>

Against France deep feeling existed. As will be recalled, there had recently been a war with that nation, and certain circumstances of the conflict had left a peculiar enmity behind. Later a quarrel had occurred with the French minister, a haughty, domineering individual, whose doings had keenly and justly offended Mexican pride; and that difficulty had not yet been settled. The French king himself had urged the recognition of Texas in an imperative and almost insulting manner. In July, 1844, for instance, Louis Philippe inquired of the Mexican minister whether his government thought of acknowledging the independence of Texas, and when Garro replied without hesitation in the negative he retorted, "Then I must tell you with all frankness that my intelligence is not able to understand your policy"; and he would not permit the envoy to explain. Such insistence on the part of France appeared, like England's urgency, too suggestive of self-interest.<sup>12</sup>

Behind all these particular causes of distrust, there lay also a deep-seated suspicion of foreigners in general. This highly characteristic attitude of mind among the Mexicans was largely a heritage from the colonial period, when aliens had been rigidly excluded, but people were confirmed in it by all sorts of misrepresentations. When the cholera morbus was making terrible ravages in 1833, it was alleged and widely believed that the cause of the scourge was

<sup>11</sup> *Crescent City*, June 20, 1842; Pakenham, no. 48, July 1, 1836, F. O., Mexico, XCIX.; Thompson, no. 40, February 2, 1844, State Dept., Desps. from Mins., Mexico, XI.; (Upshur) State Dept., Mexican Notes, February 16, 1844; Almonte, no. 28 (*reservada*), 1844, Sria. Relac.; *id.*, no. 161 (*priv.*), December 14, 1844, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Garro, no. 15 (*res.*), July 4, 1844, Sria. Relac.



the poisoning of fountains by men from abroad. This one illustration will suffice, but the number that could be given is almost without limit. Finally, Mexican administrations had so insecure a tenure of existence that officials lived only for the day; political opponents were so cunning and unscrupulous and the public so wanting in confidence and intelligence that no avoidable responsibility was willingly incurred; the ministers themselves were in most cases unequal to their tasks, and all of them had more work than could be done; and the eternal doctrine of *Mañana* (to-morrow) always provided a convenient way of escape. In short, the recognition of Texas presented itself to the Mexican mind as a great sacrifice of honor and interest, on the recommendation of one country that was considered a perfidious, arrogant, and over-prosperous rival, eager to acquire the territory; of another that was regarded as hateful in war and hateful in peace; of a third that was known to be a creditor and believed to be a schemer; and of a fourth that was looked upon as a handful of insolent, ungrateful beggars, at once the scum and the dregs of Christendom; while all the complications of Mexican politics and all the peculiarities of Mexican character tended to recommend the policy of inaction.<sup>13</sup>

By the middle of February, 1844, Bankhead, the British minister in Mexico, received official information by the way of Van Zandt (the Texan chargé at Washington), Elliot (the British chargé in Texas), and the Foreign Office that the United States had informally proposed annexation to the Texan government, and one can hardly doubt that he communicated to the Mexican officials a piece of news so important in itself and so well calculated to justify the course recommended by England. All the steps made known by the American newspapers were closely followed from that time on, and many articles directed against the project, which appeared in the anti-administration journals of the United States, accusing the government of bad faith towards Mexico, of greed, and of duplicity, were reproduced in the official *Diario* and in other Mexican papers. To suggest what their effect upon the public mind must have been, it is enough to mention that an article from the *Anti-Slavery Standard* of New York was presented as an impartial account of Tyler's proceedings. The popular Democratic view that the presidential election had settled the question of annexation did not escape notice; and the President's messages of December, 1844, were carefully scanned. Whatever others asserted, the Mexican consul at New

<sup>13</sup> (Fountains) Pakenham, no. 55, October 5, 1833, F. O., Mexico, LXXX.

Orleans insisted continually in his despatches home that annexation was now only a question of time.<sup>14</sup>

On February 14, 1845, the passage of Brown's resolution, which embodied that project, by the House of Representatives was known at Mexico, and this news created "great consternation" in the cabinet, reported Bankhead. Cuevas, who then held the portfolio of foreign relations, immediately asked the opinion of this sensible diplomat, who chanced to be with him when the information arrived, and was earnestly counselled to be moderate and cautious. Soon after, Bankhead followed up this advice by entreating him to delay no longer the acknowledgment of Texan independence. Cuevas replied that a proposition to recognize the revoltors would be instantly rejected by Congress unless backed and aided by England and France, but, with an assurance of that support, would certainly pass. "I reminded his Excellency", reported Bankhead, "that any assistance from England must be a moral one, for that whatever disposition may at one time have existed to go beyond that line, had now been withdrawn"; and this unsatisfactory assurance was all that could be obtained.<sup>15</sup>

The following month Cuevas laid before Congress a *Memoria*. On the portion of it relating to Texas he had consulted Bankhead, and one may suppose had been influenced by him. In this paper the minister argued that under Santa Anna the foreign affairs of México had been very badly managed, and endeavored to bring against the hostile attitude maintained towards the Texans all the unpopularity of the now overthrown tyrant—the ministry, as he explained, having been "blind, and wholly carried away by the impetuous genius of the man who dominated it". He then proceeded to adduce reasons for adopting a new method in handling the matter. It is impossible to regain our lost territory, he argued. The people are all aliens; they have no sympathy with Mexico; and they can neither be exterminated nor compelled to join heartily with us. Military success against them, if possible, would cost more than it would be worth; and the only real chance would be

<sup>14</sup> December 26, 1843, the British Foreign Office sent to Bankhead a copy of a despatch from the British chargé in Texas dated October 31, which reported an interview with Houston at which the chargé had been shown a despatch from Van Zandt dated September 18, stating that the American Secretary of State had informally proposed the annexation of Texas, F. O., Mexico, CLX. (mails usually passed between Mexico City and London in about six weeks); *Diario*, June 15, 1844, etc.; Arrangoiz, consul, no. 58, June 17, 1844, no. 60 (*res.*), June 19, 1844, no. 26, February 4, 1845, Sria. Relac.

<sup>15</sup> *Diario del Gobierno*, February 14, 1844; Bankhead, no. 19, March 1, 1845, F. O., Mexico, CLXXXIV.

to induce colonists from other nations to settle there and neutralize the influence of the Americans. War, then, is not feasible. Equally grave is the problem of recognition. The national honor and the integrity of the national territory are involved in that question. If independent, Texas would carry on smuggling operations and would be the ally and tool of the United States. Worse yet, however, would be the absorption of that region by its great neighbor, for while "the independence of Texas perhaps would not make necessary a war with the American republic; from its annexation, this must inevitably result." It is, therefore, "not strange that the idea be suggested of a negotiation which, based upon our rights, should be worthy of the Republic and should ensure definitively the respect with which the United States must regard Mexico". If such a course be pursued, the nation, in case of war, "can reckon upon more sympathy [than could otherwise be expected] and upon the co-operation of that just and enlightened policy which prevails in the world today".<sup>16</sup>

Meantime reports from Arrangoiz, the consul at New Orleans, made the success of the annexationists appear still more certain. On March 8, he wrote that even the fear of war would not stop the United States, and a week later that, although most of the Texan newspapers condemned the terms of Brown's resolution, it would be accepted by the people. The Mexican public became greatly excited and the government found it necessary to despatch troops northward; but on March 20 Bankhead informed Elliot that all the bravado of threatening hostilities meant nothing and that Mexico was disposed to receive overtures with a view to recognition. This assurance Cuevas had authorized him to give.<sup>17</sup>

On the very next day came official information that the American Senate and President had acted in favor of annexation. Cuevas immediately sent for Bankhead, who endeavored to calm his excitement; and later both the English and the French ministers discussed the situation with the Mexican secretary and strongly recommended moderation. Congress was officially informed of the news on March 22 and that body immediately put on a warlike front. It was proposed in the lower house to abrogate the treaty of amity and commerce existing between the United States and Mexico, shut out American trade, and prohibit the restoration of commercial inter-

<sup>16</sup> *Memoria*, March 11, 1845; Bankhead, no. 46, April 29, 1845, F. O., Mexico, CLXXXV.

<sup>17</sup> Arrangoiz, no. 47 (*res.*), March 8, no. 51 (*res.*), March 14, 1845, Sria. Relac.; Bankhead, no. 27, March 31, 1845, F. O., Mexico, LXXXIV.; *id.* to Elliot, March 20, 1845, *ibid.*

course except on the basis of non-annexation; and a few days later it was moved that "under the existing circumstances the Government should listen to no proposition having for its object the recognition of the independence of Texas, and under no circumstances to propositions looking toward the annexation of that Department to the United States"; and the resolution even undertook to make it legally treasonable to "promote either of these designs by speech or writing". A letter to Shannon, though moderated by the British and French representatives, broke off diplomatic relations with him; yet, as the *London Times* noted at once, it did not reassert the claim of Mexico to the Texan territory, and it was plain to close observers that the government had not been controlled entirely by the feelings of the public or even by their own.<sup>18</sup>

On the afternoon of April 7 a fearful earthquake shook the capital and filled the inhabitants of the city with mourning and alarm. Immense damages were caused, the halls of Congress were so much injured that sessions could no longer be held there, and shocks continued to work havoc the following day. Whether this visitation had any effect on public sentiment cannot be known, but a spirit of seriousness must have been promoted by it, and the government may have argued that the superstitious masses would feel doubtful whether heaven approved of their bellicose excitement. At all events, on April 8 Bankhead wrote that he believed Congress would accept "any fair plan" for acknowledging the independence of Texas.<sup>19</sup>

Two days later the official journal published the note that Almonte had addressed to the American government after the President had signed the annexation resolution, protesting against his action and announcing an intention to withdraw from the country. This document was of course well suited to stimulate public opinion at Mexico, for it described the absorption of Texas as "an act of aggression the most unjust which can be found recorded in the annals of modern history", and assumed an equally high tone all the way through. Much more noteworthy, however, was Buchanan's reply, published at Mexico on the same day, for it declared suggestively that the admission of Texas to the American Union was now irrevocably decided upon so far as the United States were

<sup>18</sup> Bankhead, no. 27 (see note 17); *Diario*, April 11, 1845; *La Voz del Pueblo*, March 29, 1845; Shannon, no. 9, March 27, no. 10, April 6, 1845. State Dept., Desps. from Mins., Mexico, XII.; Cuevas to Shannon, March 28, 1845, *Diario*, March 28, 1845; *Times*, May 10, 1845.

<sup>19</sup> *México á través de los Siglos*, IV. 539; Bankhead to Elliot, April 8, 1845, F. O., Texas, XXIII.

concerned, and added explicitly that only a refusal of the other party to accept the terms and conditions upon which her admission depended could frustrate the design. This language, though far from being so intended, was a strong argument in favor of the proposed negotiations with Texas, and some of the quick-witted Mexicans doubtless caught the hint.<sup>20</sup>

Scarcely was the ink of the *Diario* dry, when the opportunity came to take advantage of Buchanan's suggestion. It was the earnest wish of England and France, now acting in concert regarding the matter, to prevent the annexation of Texas to the United States; and the British representative on the ground had believed for some time that, if Mexico would give the Texans an assurance of security by recognizing their independence, they could be induced to maintain their nationality. In this opinion President Jones professed to concur. Accordingly, at the very end of March, when the Congress of the United States was known to have passed annexation resolutions, these gentlemen, with the French representative and the Texan secretary of state, who was opposed to the policy of joining the American Union, came together and drew up certain "Conditions preliminary to a treaty of peace", based upon the principles of recognition by Mexico and a pledge on the part of Texas to remain separate from all other countries. For obvious reasons it was deemed highly important to bring clearly before the authorities at Mexico the arguments for accepting this plan and to obtain their concurrence in the shortest possible time. On both grounds it seemed best that the British chargé should present the matter personally, and that gentleman, taking great pains to deceive the public as to his destination, slipped away south as quickly as he could.<sup>21</sup>

On the evening of April 11 the British frigate *Eurydice* came in at Vera Cruz. Without loss of time her captain landed, and as soon as possible he set out for Mexico City, carrying—it was understood—despatches for the British minister. With him went an in-

<sup>20</sup> *Diario*, April 10, 1845; Almonte to Calhoun, March 6, 1845, *Sen. Doc. No. 1*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., p. 38; Buchanan to Almonte, March 10, 1845, *ibid.*, p. 39; (hint) *México á través de los Siglos*, IV. 539.

<sup>21</sup> As this paragraph is aside from the main line of the paper and is based upon a large number of documents, it is thought best to give no references. The sources are all of a clear and unquestionable character, it is believed. The Texans' proposal was as follows (*Sen. Doc. No. 1*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., p. 88): "I. Mexico consents to acknowledge the independence of Texas; II. Texas engages that she will stipulate in the treaty not to annex herself or become subject to any country whatever; III. Limits and other conditions to be matter of arrangement in the final treaty; IV. Texas will be willing to remit disputed points respecting territory and other matters to the arbitration of umpires."

conspicuous person in a white hat. This retiring individual, however, was his cousin, Charles Elliot, the British chargé in Texas, who had induced the commander of the *Eurydice* to assume the rôle of a bearer of despatches in order to divert attention from himself; and three days later, after having been duly robbed en route by the brigands, the travellers arrived safely at the capital with the Texan proposition.<sup>22</sup>

The outlook for their mission appeared distinctly favorable. The President, Herrera, was a mild, fair, thoughtful, and patriotic citizen, and his policy was not characterized by the animosity towards the United States, real or assumed, that many previous governments of Mexico had exhibited. The official journal had even reprinted without comment an article from an American newspaper condemning Rejon's bitter correspondence with Shannon. Already the President had indicated a willingness to make advances to Texas and the terms now received from Jones were unexpectedly favorable to Mexico. In fact Bankhead described the proposition that Texas would not join any foreign nation as "a positive and unsolicited concession" to the mother-country. The British minister was regarded at this time by the American consul as the dominant factor at Mexico. Indeed the consul intimated that the administration was "under the tutelage of the British Legation", and all the influence of England favored, of course, an acceptance of the Texan overture, while the *Memoria* of Cuevas was believed to have prepared the public mind for concessions. A council of the ministers was at once convened; the proposition was laid before it; and the decision of the cabinet was to accept it.<sup>23</sup>

There existed, however, a difficulty. As the government possessed no authority to alienate any portion of the national territory, it was necessary to ask Congress for the power to do so. Several days were therefore taken to prepare that body for the request, and then, on April 21, Cuevas laid the subject before the Chamber of Deputies in what was termed an *Iniciativa*. "Circumstances have arisen", he said, "which render negotiations for the blocking of the annexation of Texas to the United States not only proper but neces-

<sup>22</sup> Elliot to Jones, April 5, 1845, endorsement, Anson Jones, *Memoranda*, etc., p. 443; Dimond, no. 236, April 12, 1845, State Dept., Desps. from Consuls, Vera Cruz, I.; Elliot to George Elliot, April 5, 1845, and memorandum, F. O., Texas, XV.; George Elliot to Austen, May 2, 1845, *ibid.*; Bankhead, no. 46, April 29, 1845, F. O., Mexico, CLXXXV.

<sup>23</sup> Shannon, no. 8, January 16, 1845, State Dept., Desps. from Mins., Mexico, XII.; Bankhead, no. 110, December 31, 1844, no. 46, April 29, 1845, F. O., Mexico, CLXXVII., CLXXXV.; Parrott to Buchanan, May 13, 1845, State Dept., Desps. from Mins., Mexico, XII.

sary . . . [and] Texas has at last proposed a settlement." To refuse to treat regarding this matter would constitute "a terrible charge against the present administration"; yet the President, "though satisfied of its importance and of the urgency of doing something in regard to it, is also convinced that the Executive cannot act in the affair without a previous authorization from the Chambers". Should this be granted, the proper steps will be taken. If an honorable arrangement can be made, the government will lay it before Congress; while if not, the government will be the first to declare for a war, "which will be the more just, the greater have been our efforts to prevent it". To adopt any other course than to break at once with the United States is a very great sacrifice for the administration; but, with a view to the welfare of the country, we suggest that "the Government be authorized to hear the propositions made regarding Texas, and proceed to negotiate such an arrangement or treaty as may be deemed proper and honorable for the Republic". This request was received "most favorably", reported Bankhead; and Elliot wrote to Jones before the day was over that in a week the conditions of peace would be formally signed.<sup>24</sup>

Public sentiment, however, had been following the Texas affair with growing excitement. The government's proposition to the Chamber was made in secret, but more or less distorted accounts of it leaked out. The Federalists accused the administration savagely of selling a part of the country for British gold, insisting that England's efforts in the matter were for selfish ends. Tornel, formerly Santa Anna's crafty satellite and now the editor of a paper, cried loudly for war though personally a notorious coward. "Let us die, but let us die bathed in the blood of our enemies!", exclaimed *El Veracruzano*. "The triumph will be ours", declared *El Jalisciense* more hopefully but with no less fury, "and the infamy will fall to the enemies of justice." "Let us fly to Texas and recover the honor of the nation!", exhorted *El Observador* of Zacatecas. "The entire nation demands war. . . . What, then, is the Government about? . . . Alas for the Mexican nation if it lose these moments, precious for overcoming its enemy! Alas for Mexico, if she forget that her independence, that her liberties are to-day in danger!", cried *La Voz del Pueblo*; and still more furiously the same popular journal exclaimed, after Cuevas had presented his *Iniciativa* to the Chamber, "Extermination and death to the Sabine was the cry of our legions victorious at the Alamo, Béjar and El

<sup>24</sup> Bankhead, no. 46, April 29, 1845, *loc. cit.*; Cuevas, *Iniciativa*, April 21, 1845, *Diario*, April 21, 1845; *México á través de los Siglos*, IV. 539; Elliot to Jones, April 21, 1845, Jones, *Memoranda*, p. 452.

Salado. Extermination and death will be the cry of the valiant regulars and of the citizen soldiery, marching enthusiastically to reconquer Texas." "Mexicans! . . . Already you have ceased to possess a frontier or even a dividing line between yourselves and your perfidious neighbor. Already you have lost the hope of preserving your independence. Day by day from now on that independence will grow feebler; and at this very moment we see our liberties, our cherished liberties, Mexicans, threatened by an enemy close at hand. You, then, Mexicans, what are you doing?"—thus appealed *El Veracruzano Libre*. "The Texas affair has ceased to be a question", declared the *Boletin de Noticias*; "In the face of the world the most horrible of perfidies has now been consummated, and the peril of our country places before us the terrible problem whether to exist or to exist no more." It is actually proposed to renounce forever, so the *Courrier Français* summarized the language of the extremists, a province that is ours; the intervention of England and France would cost us too dear; no sort of arrangement with rebels ought to be tolerated; "Delenda est Carthago!"<sup>25</sup>

Particularly violent was *La Voz del Pueblo*, and its editors, not satisfied to hurl thunderbolts—or at least firebrands—in every issue, brought out a pamphlet in which they spoke as follows:

There is a power which—thanks to the shrewd and tortuous policy of its government—keeps up in a marvellous manner despite its immense debt and its internal poverty. This power has discovered in the independence of Texas an efficacious means of advancing its interests, and has concerned itself so prominently in the affair as to give the protection of its flag to the propositions of the Texan rebels. The object of Señor Elliot's visit has been very publicly known, and the infantile confidence with which Señor Cuevas and his associates have listened without hesitation to proposals coming through such a channel has been truly wonderful. The particular attention of the whole republic is invited to the *speed* and *opportuneness* with which the *Memoria* of Señor Cuevas, the arrival of Señor Elliot, and the proposition reported by the committee on Texan affairs, have followed one upon the other. [Señor Henry Wheaton has shown that the new routes from northern Europe to central Asia will increase the importance of Austria and lessen that of Great Britain; and he has pointed out that, in order to avoid ruin, England must establish somewhere in America a system of trade like that now flourishing in the East Indies.] What better point can be found, say we, than Texas? [Firmly settled there, she will reach out to California, and use the magnificent harbor of San Francisco to establish direct relations with Asia.] We should then have to carry on a per-

<sup>25</sup> (Tornel) Bankhead, no. 48, May 20, 1845, F. O., Mexico, CLXXXV.; *El Veracruzano*, April 5, 1845; *El Jalisciense*, April 1, 1845; *El Observador*, April 6, 1845; *La Voz del Pueblo*, April 16, May 3, 1845; *El Veracruzano Libre*, March 24, 1845; *Boletin de Noticias*, March 4, 1845; *Courrier Français*, quoted by *Diario*, May 18, 1845.



petual war, and the lot of our brethren on the frontier, the lot of all Mexicans, would perhaps be no more tolerable than that of the Mahrattas in Hindostan. . . . Fascinating the eyes of the Texan rebels with the prestige of a distinguished place among the nations of the earth and at the same time impressing upon them the necessity of securing powerful support, England would transform their country, as she transformed the Ionian Islands, into a *republic under her special protection*.<sup>26</sup>

Such appeals as these were admirably calculated to excite the Mexicans, for they touched the springs of patriotism, pride, suspicion, jealousy, and conscious weakness. Five days after Cuevas presented his *Iniciativa* the American consul at Mexico reported, "War with the United States seems to be the desire of all parties rather than to see Texas annexed" to the American Union. At Vera Cruz and Puebla there were even symptoms of revolt. The cabinet felt greatly distressed. Every sign of opposition seemed invincible to the minister of foreign relations, and Bankhead reported: "It required all the argument and solicitation of Monsieur de Cyprey [the French minister] and myself to keep Señor Cuevas up to the mark, by repeating to him the absolute necessity of immediate action, and pointing out the crisis in which the Country is placed." Bankhead believed, and no doubt urged, that the incorporation of Texas into the United States would mean the opening of a door for the conquest of Mexico. Yet with all this "staring him in the face", as the British minister said, the fear of taking a responsibility often caused Señor Cuevas to present "the most puerile arguments to avoid giving a direct answer to the Texian propositions". In fact he seemed convinced by May 10 that the ministry would have to resign; but finally, stimulated by the exhortations of the British and French representatives not to abandon the cause of Mexico and encouraged by promises of support from political friends, the cabinet consented to remain in office.<sup>27</sup>

There were, however, other causes of embarrassment. All the previously mentioned considerations tending to favor inaction in the matter of recognizing Texas had an opportunity to present themselves anew. In particular it was very difficult for the ministers to shake off the familiar notion that giving up Texas might involve the loss of other territory. It is possible that Cuevas hoped to obtain, by holding off, an English and French guaranty of the northern

<sup>26</sup> *Federacion y Tejas* (México, 1845). The portions of this passage included in brackets summarize omitted sentences. The proposition of the committee on Texan affairs was in favor of the proposed negotiation.

<sup>27</sup> Parrott to Buchanan, April 26, 1845, State Dept., Desps. from Mins., Mexico, XII.; Bankhead, no. 48, May 20, 1845 (see note 25); *id.*, no. 46, April 29, 1845 (see note 23).

boundary. He knew that in June of the previous year England at least had been ready to stand behind the permanent independence of Texas, that since that time France had pursued the same Texan policy as her neighbor, and that both were now quite as anxious to have Mexico recognize that country as they had been at any previous date. He understood, too, that without such a guaranty Texan independence might prove a feeble barrier, or no barrier at all, against the United States. Seeing all this and aware that Great Britain had strongly recommended the recognition of that independence as the means of establishing such a barrier, he may reasonably have suspected that Bankhead and Cyprey were authorized to give the desired pledge should that step become absolutely necessary, and he may have adopted a policy of delay partly for effect upon them. Another statesmanlike view also may have been considered. In February the Mexican minister to the United States had written to the consul of his nation at New Orleans that the pending Oregon bill would certainly, if passed, be the cause of war between the United States and England, and this idea was forwarded to the capital. That bill, to be sure, did not become a law; but Polk's Inaugural Address took so uncompromising a stand for American claims in the far northwest that a conflict seemed once more very possible, and Cuevas may well have paused to inquire whether a war might not give his country an opportunity to make good her claim to Texas, and whether England's present eagerness to have that country recognized might not be due in a greater or less measure to a perception of this very fact.<sup>28</sup>

Procrastination, however, on the part of Mexican diplomats does not absolutely require so elaborate an explanation. Indolence was constitutional and habitual with them; and to that cause more than to any other Bankhead attributed the delay in this affair. Mexican formalism was another obstacle. Peña y Peña, chairman of the Senate committee, for example, caused the waste of several most precious days by insisting upon drawing up a labored report that went back to the Duke of Alva and the Low Countries. Then the business was nearly upset by the news that President Jones had convoked the Texan Congress to consider the American proposition for annexation, and that—as the Mexican consul at New Orleans wrote—ten more United States war vessels were coming to Vera Cruz; but Bankhead assured the government that the latter report could not be correct, and Elliot explained that Jones's action was

<sup>28</sup> Foreign Office to Bankhead, June 3, 1844, F. O., Mexico, CLXXII.; Bankhead, no. 65, August 29, 1844, *ibid.*, CLXXV.; Arrangoiz, no. 35 (*res.*), February 17, 1845, Sria. Relac.

merely intended to silence the clamor and defeat the intrigues of the American party in Texas.<sup>29</sup>

While the diplomats discussed and meditated, the *Diario* endeavored to bring the people around. Regarding the course of the United States, it said, the opinion of all is the same; but it is now a question of "opening negotiations for the very purpose of preventing" the success of their designs. If the government refuse to hear the proposals of Texas, it may hereafter be said that by so doing they brought upon us the greatest of evils; whereas if those proposals are listened to, no matter what be the outcome, it will be clear to the world that we resort to war only after exhausting all honorable measures to avoid it. Besides, the negotiations are to rest, as we understand, on a basis highly creditable to Mexico, and the result of them will be submitted to the Chambers. An opposition paper attacks the idea of even listening to Texas, on the ground that while we dream of a peaceful settlement, the United States—"who never sleep"—will overwhelm us; but there is no need of relaxing our preparations for war while we negotiate. The article in question betrays personal considerations all the way through. It is simply an attempt to discredit the ministry, and it would be better to await the result of the discussions and see what kind of a treaty is actually drawn. Others complain because the propositions of Texas are not immediately published; but it would be stupid to make them known, since the United States might then baffle us, as they have already taken advantage of every blunder on our part.<sup>30</sup>

It is charged, protested the *Diario*, that the ministry have usurped powers that do not belong to them; but this is false, for they have taken no final action and will leave the decision to the Chambers. It is objected that they have asked not only for power to hear propositions but for power to execute an agreement; but it would be absurd to let them listen yet refuse them all authority to do anything. It is argued that treaty-making is a sovereign act, and that—recognizing the ability of Texas to treat with us by asking leave to negotiate with her—the government practically admit the independence of that country; but it is well known that in every case of rebellion the seceding part of a nation is for certain purposes *regarded as if* independent, and this was done by ourselves in the instance of Yucatan. It is further objected that the organic law permits the president to make treaties only with foreign nations, and that the government, by asking permission to treat with Texas,

<sup>29</sup> Bankhead to Elliot, May 20, 1845, F. O., Texas, XXIII.; *id.*, no. 48, May 20, 1845 (see note 25).

<sup>30</sup> *Diario*, April 22, May 1, 1845.

recognize it as such; but the government would have had no occasion to ask for special powers had they regarded Texas as a foreign nation. Another objection is this: The organic law gives no authority to treat with a revolted province and therefore the mere proposition of the government is itself a violation of law; but at the worst, if the law did forbid the government to treat with a revolted province, the present proposition would be only a suggestion that one of its provisions be annulled. The constitution does not, however, forbid such negotiations, for it is merely silent on the matter.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time the urgency of the situation was further emphasized by the Mexican consul at New Orleans. The press of Texas, he reported, had come over gradually to the side of annexation, and the Congress would not dare to reject the American proposition. At Fort Jesup, near the Texas frontier, he added, there were sixteen companies of United States infantry and seven of dragoons, and other troops had been ordered to that point. In all there were 2500 or 2600 men, and they would enter Texas immediately, should it be known that Mexican soldiers had crossed the border. It would therefore be in vain to rely upon force. Meanwhile the Mexican minister to the United States, who believed his nation ought to recognize Texas at once and hurried home to present his views, appears to have arrived on the scene and doubtless he gave additional strength to that side of the question.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, after three days of debate, the Chamber of Deputies authorized the cabinet on May 3 to hear the propositions "offered by Texas", thus gratifying the national vanity by pointing out distinctly who had tendered the olive branch. At the same time, instead of permitting the ministers to negotiate such an agreement as they should consider proper and honorable, it only gave power to negotiate one that should "be" proper and honorable. For this ingenious device to saddle the responsibility upon the executive department the vote stood forty-one to thirteen. Two weeks later the Senate approved of the measure by thirty voices against six, and at length on May 20 Bankhead notified Elliot, and Cyprey notified Jones, of the acceptance of the Texan articles. Cuevas had made an additional declaration to the effect that, should the negotiation fail for any reason or should Texas consent directly or indirectly to join

<sup>31</sup> *Diario*, May 1, 6, 1845. The arguments of the *Diario* are of particular interest because they reveal the superficial and captious yet clever character of the opposition. It was aided by the ablest of Mexican journals, *El Siglo XIX*. (e. g., April 24, 1845), and by some other periodicals.

<sup>32</sup> Arrangoiz, no. 67 (*res.*), April 30, 1845, *Sria. Relac.*; Foreign Office to Cowley, ambassador to France, no. 46, April 15, 1845, *F. O., Texas, XXI.*; Shannon, no. 10, April 6, 1845, *State Dept., Desps. from Mins., Mexico, XII.*

the United States, the action of Mexico in agreeing to treat with her should be considered null and void; but this bit of tactics did not affect the substance of the matter.<sup>33</sup>

During the last week of April Elliot, having done all that he could at the capital, retired to the beautiful town of Jalapa, not far from Vera Cruz, and there awaited the result of his mission. On learning what had been accomplished, he sailed for Galveston in the French brig of war, *La Pérouse*, and on May 30 he found himself in port. All his efforts and those of his French colleague, however, though seconded by the Texan executive, came to naught. Public sentiment declared emphatically in favor of joining the American Union. The conditions of peace, when laid before the Senate, were promptly rejected; and both Congress and a convention of the people accepted the annexation proposal of the United States.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Diario*, May 18, 1845; Bankhead to Elliot, May 20, 1845, F. O., Texas, XXIII.; Cyprey to Jones, May 20, 1845, Texan archives, Austin; *México à través de los Siglos*, IV. 543. A recent publication touching on this matter states that the Mexican government "attached its signature to the document" only after "such changes were made as were considered 'essential to the maintenance of Mexican honor'"; but a glance at pp. 88 and 89 of *Sen. Doc. No. 1*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., will show that no changes whatever were made. Here lies a point of much importance. Elliot and Saligny (the French chargé in Texas) had been compelled to use great urgency in order to bring Jones into this arrangement, and his pledge to take certain action desired by them and by Mexico was made conditional on the signing at Mexico of "the preliminary conditions now submitted" (Elliot, secret, April 2, 1845, F. O., Texas, XIII.). Consequently any modification of these would have been seen by Elliot, Saligny, and Cuevas to threaten ruin to their entire plan by enabling Jones to declare that the condition of his pledge had not been fulfilled. The "Additional Declaration" of Cuevas, evidently intended as a shield against his political adversaries, was worded as follows: "It is understood that besides the four preliminary articles proposed by Texas, there are other essential and important points which ought also to be included in the negotiation, and that if this negotiation is not realized on account of circumstances, or because Texas, influenced by the law passed in the United States on annexation, should consent thereto, either directly or indirectly, then the answer which under this date is given to Texas, by the undersigned, Minister for Foreign Affairs, shall be considered as null and void. Mexico, May 19, 1845" (*Sen. Doc. No. 1*, 29 Cong., 1 sess., p. 89).

<sup>34</sup> *London Times*, June 4, 1845; Dimond to State Department, no. 243, May 27, 1845, State Dept., Desps. from Consuls, Vera Cruz, I.; (arrival) Elliot, no. 16, May 30, 1845, F. O., Texas, XIII. The rest of the paragraph refers to matters of common knowledge.